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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups

Monitoring of the implementation of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities

Note by the Secretary-General

1. At its forty-eighth session, the General Assembly adopted the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, contained in the annex to its resolution 48/96. These 22 Standard Rules provide a framework to further implement the goals of "equality" and "full participation" of disabled persons in social life and development as set forth in the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, adopted by the Assembly in its resolution 37/52.

2. Section IV, paragraph 2, of the Standard Rules stipulates that the rules should be monitored within the framework of the sessions of the Commission for Social Development. The appointment of a Special Rapporteur to monitor their implementation was also envisaged in that paragraph.

3. In March 1994, the Secretary-General appointed Bengt Lindqvist (Sweden) Special Rapporteur on Disability of the Commission. Mr. Lindqvist prepared three reports (see A/52/56, E/CN.5/2000/3 and Corr.1 and E/CN.5/2002/4) for the consideration of the Commission during his mandate, which was renewed in 1997 and in 2000 by the Economic and Social Council in its resolutions 1997/19 and 2000/10, respectively.

4. In June 2003, the Secretary-General appointed Sheikha Hessa Al-Thani (Qatar) Special Rapporteur for the period 2003-2005. The Special Rapporteur submitted an

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oral report to the Commission at its forty-second session. At its forty-third session in February 2005, the Commission was presented with the report of the Special Rapporteur (see E/CN.5/2005/5 and Corr.1). In its resolution 2005/9, the Economic and Social Council welcomed the work of the Special Rapporteur and decided to renew her mandate through 31 December 2008. The Commission considered the reports of the Special Rapporteur at its forty-fourth, forty-fifth and forty-sixth sessions in February 2006, February 2007 and February 2008, respectively (see E/CN.5/2006/4, E/CN.5/2007/4 and E/CN.5/2008/3).

5. In its resolution 2008/20, entitled "Further promotion of equalization of opportunities by, for and with persons with disabilities and protection of their human rights", the Economic and Social Council decided to renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur until 31 December 2011 in accordance with the provisions set down in section IV of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities to further their promotion and monitoring, including the human rights dimensions of disability, and the provisions of that resolution.

6. In August 2010, the Secretary-General appointed Shuaib Chalklen (South Africa) Special Rapporteur on Disability of the Commission for the period 2009-2011. Mr. Chalklen delivered an oral report to the Commission at its forty-eighth session. The Economic and Social Council also requested the Special Rapporteur to submit to the Commission an annual report on his activities in implementing resolution 2008/20. The Secretary-General has the honour to submit to the Commission the annual report of the Special Rapporteur pursuant to that resolution.

Report of the Special Rapporteur on Disability of the Commission for Social Development on monitoring of the implementation of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities

Contents

		Page
I.	Introduction	4
II.	Background	4
III.	Activities of the Special Rapporteur on Disability	5
	A. Monitoring of the implementation of the Standard Rules and synergy among the disability-specific instruments	5
	B. Mainstreaming disability in development	6
	C. Fostering international cooperation	9
	D. Promoting the implementation of the Standard Rules, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other international development instruments	12
	E. Vulnerable groups within the disability community	12
IV.	Observations and conclusions	13
V.	Recommendations	14
VI.	Planned activities for 2011	14

I. Introduction

1. This is my first report to the Commission for Social Development on my activities pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/20 and in accordance with the provisions set forth in section IV of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

2. I wish to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General and the Commission for Social Development for entrusting me with the important role of Special Rapporteur on Disability. I would like to extend my gratitude to the Governments of Finland, Norway and Sweden for their generous support towards my work and to all Governments that have also provided generous contributions.

3. I wish to thank the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and its staff for their excellent support in helping me carry out my mandate throughout this period.

II. Background

4. The foundation for disability rights and development was laid out in the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (1982). Since then, the development of a number of important instruments has shaped the international policy discourse on disability, including most notably, the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). Together, these three instruments constitute the core international normative framework for action to promote the advancement of the rights of persons with disabilities in the world. The synergy and complementarities among these three disability-specific instruments have been recognized and emphasized by the General Assembly in a series of resolutions.[1]

5. In this context, my work and priorities are built on the three instruments on disability, relevant human rights and development instruments, including the Millennium Development Goals, other internationally agreed development goals and relevant international commitments and standards.

6. This report covers the period from February to October 2010, nine months following my oral report to the forty-eighth session of the Commission in February 2010. I have concentrated my efforts on highlighting my work in relation to my vision and priorities, which I outlined during my address to the Commission as follows:

- Monitoring, promoting and implementing the Standard Rules in light of the Convention and other disability instruments in the context of development and their usage in the development of national policies
- Promoting the mainstreaming of disability in priorities of the global development agenda, such as poverty and hunger, focusing on the Millennium Development Goals

[1] Most recently, in General Assembly resolutions 63/150 and 64/131.

- Raising greater awareness and support for the implementation of the Standard Rules, the Convention and other internationally agreed development norms, including the Millennium Development Goals
- Fostering international cooperation
- Focusing special attention on measures to address the vulnerabilities of specific groups within the disability community, such as women and girls with disabilities, children and persons with mental disabilities, and persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies, including in the emergency witnessed in Haiti in 2010.

7. Over the course of the nine months, I travelled on mission to a number of countries in different regions, including Denmark, Ethiopia, Finland, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Norway, Qatar, Sweden, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United States of America and Zambia.

8. I am pleased to note that in many parts of the world, progress continues with an increasing attention to disability issues, including through the swift signing and ratification of the Convention. As at 15 November 2010, 96 countries had ratified the Convention and the figure is expected to climb, as Member States commit themselves to promoting the rights of persons with disabilities in all aspects of society and development.

9. I also found, however, that more needs to be done in order to translate the commitments to the rights of persons with disabilities into concrete action and practice, so as to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy their universal human rights.

10. I am strongly convinced that disability issues must be placed firmly within the mainstream development agenda. More action and measures must be taken to further raise awareness among key stakeholders about the rights of persons with disabilities. Attitudinal, institutional and environmental barriers must be removed for persons with disabilities to participate on a daily basis in society. International cooperation of all forms, including exchange of knowledge and expertise, good practices and financial assistance, should be further promoted.

11. Full and effective implementation of the Standard Rules for the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, can continue to play an important role for Member States in their endeavours to ensure equal opportunities for, and full participation of, persons with disabilities in all aspects of development.

III. Activities of the Special Rapporteur on Disability

A. Monitoring of the implementation of the Standard Rules and synergy among the disability-specific instruments

12. Member States and organizations of persons with disabilities are increasing their efforts to promote the rights of persons with disabilities in society and development in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to bring about lasting change in the lives of persons with disabilities.

13. For example, in Zambia, disabled persons' organizations, in partnership with international development organizations, are using article 9 of the Convention concerning accessibility in the High Court. In this context, the Zambian parliamentary complex was used as a legal example. As a result of their efforts, the Government and the High Court eventually agreed to make the parliamentary complex more accessible.

14. At the invitation of the Government of Qatar, I visited Qatar to discuss the implementation of the Standard Rules. My preliminary observations from the mission are available from: www.un.org/disabilities/documents/specialrapporteur/qatar_2010.doc.

15. An encouraging development is that many Member States that have ratified the Convention and its Optional Protocol have witnessed expanded constituencies, with civil society organizations and individuals working with Government. Together, they contribute to the reports submitted to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Convention and promoting the disability agenda in development.

16. The findings of missions and relevant studies that I have conducted demonstrate that the Standard Rules continue to provide helpful and practical guidance tools for Member States in raising awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities, establishing national coordination mechanisms, empowering disabled persons' organizations and promoting equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in fields such as advocating and promoting accessibility, rehabilitation, education and access to social protection as well as promoting international cooperation.

17. To better fulfil my tasks in this respect, more specific missions to enhance monitoring of the implementation of the Standard Rules are planned for 2010-2011.

18. I have also been invited to the next meeting of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to be held in April 2011 in Geneva.

B. Mainstreaming disability in development

1. Member States

19. In relation to Economic and Social Council resolutions 2008/21 and 2010/13 on mainstreaming disability in the development agenda, I note that the issue of mainstreaming disability in development attracted the most attention from the international community.

20. At the forty-eighth session of the Commission for Social Development, I chaired a panel discussion consisting of speakers from major bilateral and international agencies and the United Nations. The panel was part of a series of panels on disability organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in partnership with other key stakeholders, including the Global Partnership for Disability and Development, the Governments of Finland and Italy and offices of the United Nations system. The participants discussed good practices adopted by the participating agencies and shared their experiences and vision for inclusive and barrier-free development cooperation through mainstreaming and empowerment of persons with disabilities, also referred to as the "twin-track approach" to disability.

21. In the Secretary-General's report, "Keeping the promise: realizing the Millennium Development Goals for persons with disabilities towards 2015 and beyond" (A/65/173), I recognize that a high number of countries (43) submitted reports that contained important analysis and discussion on the progress and challenges concerning the advancement of persons with disabilities in development and the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. The report recognizes the importance of improving disability data and statistics.

22. The report refers to disability and the Millennium Development Goals in the context of progress and challenges within Member States; however, there is very little information on how persons with disabilities are benefiting from the development efforts to meet the Goals. In many countries, there remains a lack of awareness of the needs of persons with disabilities and a lack of understanding of disability-inclusive development.

23. I note that the report of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) on Africa and the Millennium Development Goals only contains a few references to persons with disabilities. There is also a lack of awareness concerning inclusive development, which underscores the need for data and analysis of the situation of persons with disabilities in economic and social development. Unless this urgent need is addressed, future reports will contain as little information as is currently available.

24. At its sixty-fifth session, the General Assembly adopted a resolution in which it called for the further mainstreaming of disability in the Millennium Development Goals and in the work of Member States, donors and the United Nations system.[2] The Assembly reaffirmed disability as a multidimensional and cross-cutting development issue. It further requested the Secretary-General to collect and present information about the situation of persons with disabilities and the progress made in achieving the Millennium Development Goals for persons with disabilities with a view to convening a High-level Meeting at the United Nations in 2012. This initiative will prompt the international community to develop a new plan to ensure the achievement of internationally accepted development goals, including for persons with disabilities towards 2015 and beyond.

2. United Nations system

25. I note that more and more initiatives are being taken by United Nations agencies to work towards the advancement of disability rights in development.

26. For example, a number of panel discussions and events were organized by United Nations agencies, in partnership with Member States, civil society organizations and academic institutions, on mainstreaming disability in development. They were organized under specific themes such as disability statistics and data, inclusion of women and girls with disabilities, persons with disabilities in the context of relief and reconstruction in situations of risk and natural disasters, such as Haiti's earthquake, mental health issues and the Millennium Development Goals.

[2] See A/C.3/65/L.12/Rev.1, adopted by the Third Committee of the General Assembly on 9 November 2010.

27. I am pleased to see that accessibility is being promoted by more agencies as both a goal and a means of enabling persons with disabilities to fully participate in development. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs organized an expert group meeting on accessibility to information and communications technology and physical environments in Washington, D.C., in June 2010. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, with the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, also hosted a day of general discussion on the issue of accessibility. I commend this important effort by the United Nations.

28. In October 2010, the United Nations Development Group and the Inter-Agency Support Group on Disability finalized and endorsed a guidance note on mainstreaming disability in the work of United Nations country teams. This note will assist country offices in advocating the rights of persons with disabilities in order to ensure that disability issues and persons with disabilities are included in all aspects of United Nations programming at the country level. I look forward to working closely with country teams and their partners to build new coalitions for our common endeavour to bring disability to national development policies and programmes.

29. The World Health Organization (WHO) has also launched new community-based rehabilitation guidelines, developed in partnership with other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations. I believe these important guidelines will empower persons with disabilities and their communities. Together with these communities, I intend to advocate a multisectoral approach to include persons with disabilities in health, education and employment.

30. In September 2010, I held meetings with several United Nations agencies based in New York, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The purpose of the meetings was to discuss the mainstreaming of disability in their policies and programmes. I commend their ongoing efforts; UNICEF, for example, established a post for a disability adviser who will mainstream disability in its policies and programmes.

31. I believe more efforts can be made by the United Nations in mainstreaming disability in the work of all agencies, including through the recruitment of persons with disabilities by the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes.

3. Promoting disability-inclusive development in Africa

32. Promoting disability-inclusive development in Africa is one of the priority areas that I have been working on since my appointment. In my oral report in February 2010, I mentioned a meeting on disability in Africa, held at ECA in April 2010 (previously planned for the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya). The meeting was co-organized by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and the secretariat of the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities. The African Union also attended the meeting.

33. The purpose of the meeting was to carry out a review of the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities and to chart a way forward for a second decade. The conference concluded that there had been many achievements during the African Decade. In particular, the African Decade had been successful in building capacity in the countries in which it had received the support of Governments for its

activities, notably in Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania. With the support of the International Labour Organization (ILO), WHO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the African Union, a Continental Plan of Action was drafted for adoption.

34. The conference reported serious challenges confronting the African Decade in its second term. Some of the challenges are: funding constraints, lack of support of Governments, lack of donor support, capacity constraints within the secretariat, the absence of an institutional link with the intergovernmental bodies, such as the African Union, and lack of clarity of the role of the secretariat of the African Decade. What was clear from this conference is that the African Decade is in great need of other development partners.

35. Following the review meeting of the Southern African Federation of the Disabled, I started a process of consultation with local partners on the formation of an African Disability Forum. The idea of the African Disability Forum is to develop a knowledge base that would build the capacity of Governments and disabled persons' organizations in Africa to enable them to strengthen their voice and to engage international development partners on matters concerning persons with disabilities on the African continent. I am in support of such a body.

36. Two international conferences will take place in Durban, South Africa, in 2011. The XVI World Congress of the World Federation of the Deaf will take place in July 2011 and Disabled Peoples' International will hold a conference in October 2011. I have been invited to both conferences as a key speaker and I intend to bring the knowledge and experience of the United Nations concerning the rights of persons with disabilities to contribute to those conferences.

C. Fostering international cooperation

37. International cooperation is an important component of development, as envisaged by the Standard Rules, World Programme of Action and article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This was further emphasized by General Assembly resolutions 64/131 and 63/150 and Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/20. Article 32 is unique as it is the first stand-alone article within a core human rights convention. Article 32 refers to the sharing of knowledge and information between States, the building of capacity and the transfer of economic assistance.

38. The mainstreaming of disability in development cooperation was discussed extensively in the meetings I participated in with several donor countries.

39. In August 2010, I met a delegation from the Japan International Cooperation Agency who visited three African countries with a view to researching the viability of establishing independent living centres in Africa. The countries visited were Kenya, Malawi and South Africa. I acted as the facilitator for the meetings of members of the delegation and the Government of South Africa. The delegation officials expressed their keen interest in establishing these centres with the support of the Governments and organizations of persons with disabilities. The aim of this initiative in helping African countries to set up these centres is to support persons with disabilities to live independently within their communities. The knowledge and

information concerning independent living provided by the Agency will help to set up these centres through a process of capacity-building over a period of three years. Subject to the support of the Governments of Kenya, Malawi and South Africa, the process will begin in 2011. The first phase will consist of training in Japan for persons with disabilities and Government officials. This will continue throughout the process of establishing the centres.

40. In May and June 2010, I visited Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden at the invitation of their Governments. The purpose of my visits was to meet with representatives of Governments and organizations of persons with disabilities and to discuss a way forward to promote disability-inclusive international development cooperation. The Government of Norway also expressed its interest in hosting a meeting to discuss the issue further in the context of the situation of persons with disabilities in areas of humanitarian disasters.

41. These countries provide very strong support for the human rights of persons with disabilities in development. However, disability is often positioned as a specific sector rather than mainstreamed throughout their policies and programmes on international development. Similarly, other donor countries have not adopted a policy of mainstreaming disability in their development cooperation agenda. One of the reasons for this is that the recipient countries have not identified disability as a development priority. There is also very limited monitoring of the development outcomes by civil society organizations and Governments in donor countries at this time. I intend to work closely with Governments in donor countries to pursue this matter further.

42. With a view to bringing a social development perspective, in March 2010 I attended the thirteenth session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva and presented a paper concerning issues related to article 33 of the Convention (national monitoring and the disability focal point within Government).

43. In Human Rights Council resolution 13/11, entitled "Human rights of persons with disabilities: national implementation and monitoring and introducing as the theme for 2011 the role of international cooperation in support of national efforts for the realization of the rights of persons with disabilities", the Human Rights Council requested a "study to enhance the awareness of international cooperation". There is no doubt that such a study would provide a unique opportunity to explore the potential of article 32. Given that the study will be discussed in the Human Rights Council, I hope that the potential of realizing the human rights and development dimensions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities will be further expanded so that concrete action may be taken that will bring about practical changes in the lives of persons with disabilities. Also, it is my hope that the study will emphasize disability-inclusive development and a traditional understanding of North-South cooperation. I am also seeking to build bridges with other thematic mandate holders in the realm of human rights.

44. I am planning a number of activities in this regard in the following priority areas as mentioned below:

Disability-inclusive Millennium Development Goals

45. The draft outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals

(64/299, annex), is encouraging in that it particularly notes that policies and actions must include all, especially those that are still invisible, so that they may benefit from progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It specifically highlights the need to include accessibility for persons with disabilities in poverty eradication measures as well as in education. Prior to this, a need to ensure accessibility and inclusion for all in the Millennium Development Goals had also been emphasized in General Assembly resolution 64/131. The explicit mention of persons with disabilities in the draft outcome document is an encouraging call to action for disability.

46. I would like to underscore the call contained in the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2010 of the Economic and Social Council, which emphasizes "the need for measures to ensure that women and girls with disabilities are not subject to multiple or aggravated forms of discrimination, or excluded from participation in the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, and in this regard further emphasize the need to ensure their equal access to education at all levels, including technical and vocational training, and adequate rehabilitation programmes, health care and services and employment opportunities, to protect and promote all their human rights and to eliminate existing inequalities between women and men with disabilities".

47. Civil society organizations such as the International Disability Alliance, the International Disability and Development Consortium and the Global Partnership for Disability and Development have also made numerous interventions at the United Nations on the importance of mainstreaming disability. I had meetings with the International Disability Alliance on the establishment of a multi-donor trust fund on disability to translate into reality the vision of the United Nations to advance the rights of persons with disabilities. I fully support these ideas to establish such a fund.

48. In support of mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities in the Millennium Development Goals, I participated in a side event hosted by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland as part of the High-level Plenary Meeting in September 2010. The event increased attention on disability issues and called for action to mainstream the rights and concerns of persons with disabilities in all aspects of development, especially in the Millennium Development Goals. In Copenhagen, in May 2010, I held a meeting with the Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations, who was co-chairing the Millennium Development Goal review exercise to discuss how to better address the invisibility of disability and the urgent need for disability-inclusion in Millennium Development Goal processes.

49. In the context of health-related Millennium Development Goal measures, the international community increasingly recognizes the importance of mental health in ongoing efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Much work remains to be done to promote and guarantee the right to health of persons with disabilities, especially with respect to mental health. Mental health is still a neglected issue in development. I commend the initiatives of United Nations departments and agencies in the area of mental health and development, including the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and WHO, which have recently organized a panel discussion to commemorate the launch of the WHO report entitled "Mental health

and development: targeting people with mental health conditions as a vulnerable group".

50. At the regional level, at its 146th session, the Executive Committee of the Pan American Health Organization adopted a resolution on health and human rights that reiterated the linkages between health and the human rights instruments of the United Nations and inter-American systems.

D. Promoting the implementation of the Standard Rules, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other international development instruments

51. I continue to raise awareness of the Convention, the World Programme of Action, the Standards Rules and other international development instruments related to persons with disabilities.

52. During the discussions with the Government officials of the countries I visited on my missions, despite the swift signing and ratification of the Convention, I noted the relatively slow progress being made in the implementation of the Standard Rules. While on mission at United Nations Headquarters in August and September 2010, I met with representatives of Governments and civil society organizations in informal sessions, in which we discussed measures to promote the implementation of the Convention, the Standard Rules and international development goals and to further raise awareness of specific issues, including those related to women, children and other persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities.

53. One day prior to the third session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, I made a keynote address at the Civil Society Forum entitled "Ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the international cooperation and development context: stakes, challenges and opportunities". In my presentation, I drew attention to the large number of persons with disabilities living in poverty in the global South and the key role of civil society in lobbying national Governments to include disability in development projects. The need to strengthen the voice of persons with disabilities and for better coordination between global coalitions of disability organizations to promote disability in development was highlighted. I also emphasized the importance of self-representation in raising greater awareness of the conditions of women and girls with psychosocial disabilities.

54. I will, in the coming years, continue these efforts and focus on raising awareness among regional parliamentary forums and regional development institutions, such as the African Union, ECA and the African Development Bank.

E. Vulnerable groups within the disability community

55. In my oral report to the Commission in February 2010, I stated that I would focus on vulnerable groups such as women and girls with disabilities, persons with mental disabilities, the deaf and those in situations of risk such as humanitarian disasters.

56. On my missions, I often referred to the urgency of addressing the situation of women and girls with mental disabilities as an especially vulnerable group within Africa.

57. My intention is to raise greater awareness of these greatly marginalized groups among persons with disabilities and hopefully to ensure the full inclusion of persons with mental disabilities, with a focus on girls and women with disabilities, in the global development agenda.

58. In September 2010, I held meetings with UNHCR, the World Bank and the Department of State of the United States of America, in which these critical issues were raised. Officials of these institutions expressed a keen interest in the issue and the World Bank indicated its interest in pursuing this matter further. The Global Partnership for Disability and Development developed a handbook on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in situations of humanitarian disasters and I wish to commend them for their efforts. I am concerned that very little attention is paid to issues related to persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies.

IV. Observations and conclusions

59. In the relatively short time since February 2010, I have strived to fulfil my mandate as the Special Rapporteur on Disability. The following are my observations and conclusions:

60. The first and most significant development in the disability field in the past several years is related to the Convention and its role in promoting disability rights in the development agenda. The Convention, together with the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the Standard Rules, strengthens the international normative framework, which provides guidelines for measures and action for promoting the equalization of opportunities. However, there is a persistent gap between commitments and policy and practices, and more should be done to narrow this gap.

61. Regrettably, the most common barriers to inclusive development are still very much apparent in many parts of the world. These barriers take various forms, such as negative attitudes, lack of resources, lack of political will, poor support for inclusion among development professionals, absence of a clear legal framework and lack of capacity to implement policies. There is a lack of an effective mechanism to ensure that information and knowledge on best practices are shared among Member States.

62. By adopting the resolution entitled "Realizing the Millennium Development Goals for persons with disabilities towards 2015 and beyond",[3] the General Assembly has reiterated its firm commitment to further disability rights in the global development agenda and promote disability-inclusive development.

63. Initiatives such as the United Nations guidance note should support Member States and country teams in efforts towards mainstreaming disability in the Millennium Development Goals and in development programmes generally.

[3] See A/C.3/65/L.12/Rev.1.

64. Greater effort is required to make disability part of the development agenda and the dialogue on development. The lack of available data on the situation of persons with disabilities is noted as a major challenge in this endeavour.

65. The full implementation of the Standard Rules continues to play a useful role in improving the lives of persons with disabilities.

66. I commit myself to ensuring the best use and synergy of existing normative instruments on disability and I am ready to work together with all partners to advance disability rights in development in all parts of the world, including in Africa.

V. Recommendations

67. I wish to make the following recommendations:

(a) Member States and the United Nations system should urgently address the issue of lack of statistics and data on disability and analysis of the situation of persons with disabilities in economic and social development. Immediate measures need to be taken to strengthen the statistical capacity so that collection and analysis of disability data and statistics can provide evidence-based findings to promote monitoring of disability-inclusive development and evaluation of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals as well as of the Convention;

(b) Good practices and examples of promoting disability-inclusive development and the mainstreaming of disability in development should be shared among Member States;

(c) A multi-donor trust fund or similar entity should be established under the auspices of the United Nations with the aim of promoting disability rights in development and supporting the efforts of Member States in implementing internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals and the Convention;

(d) Disability focal points should be established in each of the United Nations agencies;

(e) Persons with disability and their organizations should be empowered and supported, and better coordination should be facilitated among disability coalitions;

(f) Disability should be mainstreamed in international development cooperation policies, programmes and projects through global partnerships.

VI. Planned activities for 2011

68. To continue to fulfil my mandate, I intend to work closely with Member States, the United Nations system and civil society and to continue with country visits in 2011. I also plan to facilitate an interregional dialogue on the Decades; a meeting will be held in 2011 to encourage the sharing of best practices among the different regional Decades, including the African Decade, the Arab Decade, the Asia and Pacific Decade and the Decade of the Americas for the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities.

69. Another aim of proposing a dialogue among regional Decades is to encourage interregional and international cooperation to promote the implementation of the Standard Rules and the Convention and assist with the development and implementation of national and regional disability policies.

70. In terms of mainstreaming disability in development, I support the convening of a High-level Meeting at United Nations Headquarters in 2012, as envisaged by the most recent General Assembly resolution on realizing the Millennium Development Goals for persons with disabilities towards 2015 and beyond with a view to furthering the momentum attained in this respect.

71. I intend to support a high-level African meeting on inclusive development, which shall include the African Governments, African Union, ECA, the African Development Bank, key donor countries, and institutions and organizations of persons with disabilities.

72. I will also consider convening a meeting of the panel of experts on disability issues and this will be done with the support of partners in civil society organizations, especially disabled persons' organizations such as the International Disability Alliance.

73. I will work closely with Member States, United Nations agencies and its regional commissions and the secretariat of the African Decade as well as national and regional organizations of persons with disabilities to facilitate a meeting to further the establishment of the proposed African Disability Forum. The purpose of the African Disability Forum would be to encourage the sharing of information and knowledge of best practices on the continent of Africa and globally, and to encourage research on disability that will present evidence of good practices regarding the implementation of disability policies and programmes.

74. The members of the African Disability Forum would include Governments of African countries, civil society structures, universities and international development partners. In that context, I approached representatives of the Norwegian Agency for Development, who proposed that a meeting be held to discuss the mainstreaming of disability in development cooperation agreements in the near future.

75. Throughout these activities, I will work closely and consult with global civil society, especially disability communities such as the Global Partnership for Disability and Development, the International Disability Alliance and the International Disability and Development Consortium.